



Oregon Technical Advisory Committee



Meeting Notes for February 16, 2017, 12:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.
Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife / 4034 Fairview Industrial Drive SE / Salem, OR 97302

Attendees

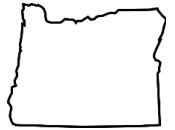
- Ron Alvarado, NRCS
- Tom Watson, NRCS
- Cory Owens, NRCS
- Loren Unruh, NRCS
- Jen Moore-Kucera, NRCS
- Tracy Robillard, NRCS
- Marc Thalaker, Three Sisters Irrigation District
- Jason Faucera, OCEAN
- Taylor Murray, FSA
- Sam Asai, FSA
- Dan Lofaro, FSA
- Robert Wallace Wy'East RCD
- Eric Hartstein, OWEB
- Kathy Stangl, BLM
- Chris Schreiner, Oregon Tilth
- Kevin Blakely ODFW
- Jerome Rosa, OCA
- Harmony Burright, OWRD
- Mike Powers, ODA
- Ryan Gordon, ODF
- Denise Troxell, NRCS
- Jerry Nicolescu, OACD

Opening Comments

- **Ron Alvarado, NRCS State Conservationist:** Ron welcomed Dan Lofaro, acting FSA director to the group and thanked FSA for its continued partnership with NRCS to co-chair the OTAC group. USDA Secretary Perdue's hearing is upcoming. Leonard Jordan is serving as the acting chief of NRCS until the new administration selects a chief.
- **Dan Lofaro, Farm Service Agency:** Former FSA Executive Director Phil Ward has moved on, FSA is awaiting a new appointee. Taylor Murray serves as FSA's conservation specialist, and leads their communications and outreach.



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Snowpack and Drought Efforts

Scott Oviatt, NRCS

- October experienced record precipitation throughout the state. Snow accumulation was off to a slow start in November due to warmer temperatures.
- By December, snow water equivalent was above normal throughout the state.
- January 1 snowpack across the state was above normal, with highest amount of snow water equivalent (SWE) in the Willamette Basin, Hood/Sandy/Lower Deschutes Basin, and Owyhee Basin.
- January precipitation was heavier in Southern Oregon.
- Current snowpack today is well above average throughout the state with the exception of northeast Oregon, which is at normal.
- Overall, we expect above normal streamflow forecasts for the spring/summer
- Drought monitor: This time last year, 77 percent of the state was in “abnormally dry” drought status D0, 68 percent was in D1, and 34 percent was in D2. But this year today, only 17 percent of Oregon is in D0, with a small amount of D1 in Baker County. We hope to continue to see drought conditions improve with continued rain and cooler weather patterns.
- NOAA is predicting an above normal chance of warmer temperatures through February and higher precipitation according to the 1-month forecast. Anticipating a warmer situation with less precipitation into early March.
- Experienced low-elevation snow accumulation in portions of the Snake River Basin and John Day / Umatilla Basins. NRCS staff met with National Weather Service and other local stakeholders to discuss implications of low elevation snowpack and potential for rain-on-snow event. Staff identified low-elevation snow content and measured snow water equivalent in those areas. NWS used the data to create localized forecasting information. Most locals in the area can't recall that much snow for 30 years or more. Onions severely impacted by the snow.
- North Fork of the John Day River near Monument, OR – main channel was iced up Feb. 5. When it melted, the river went from 700 cfs to 7,000 cfs at Service Creek station.
- 26 pounds per square foot of snow on rooftops in Baker City and other communities, resulting in roof collapses.

2017 RCPP and Two Chiefs Funding Results

Loren Unruh, NRCS



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- The Oregon partnership has shown great success in the Regional Conservation Partnership Program. We are among the leading states in the nation for RCPP participation.
- 16 projects funded to date through RCPP in Oregon. We have one more year to go for new RCPP project awards in the current Farm Bill.
- Potential to have the entire Willamette Valley covered through RCPP proposals for oak restoration.
- Joint Chiefs Projects in partnership with NRCS and the Forest Service has brought over \$8 million in funding to Oregon for forest resiliency projects.
- RCPP announcement for program funding for new proposals is out—the cut-off for pre-proposals is April 21.
- Contact local District Conservationist to get started on a pre-proposal.

Update from Oregon Water Resources Department

Harmony Burrig, OWRD

- Place-Based Planning addresses multiple water interests among multiple water user groups on landscape scale.
- Many factors contribute to the complexity of managing water resource planning: time, budgets, regulations/policies of multiple agencies, knowledge gaps, weather events (drought, flooding).
- Integrated Water Resources Strategy – started in 2009 and provides a 'blueprint' to understand and meet Oregon's instream and out-of-stream needs. Contains over 40 recommended actions. Oregon was recognized by the American Water Resources Association as a leader for integrated water management throughout the nation. This strategy has resulted in additional investments in science, capacity and communities (example: currently doing a basin investigation in Harney County)
- Place-based planning model adapted from other state's water resource planning efforts, such as Texas, Minnesota, Washington, and California.
- Place-based planning is a voluntary, non-regulatory approach in partnership with state and federal agencies to understand current/future water needs and identify solutions to meet those needs. It cannot change existing policy or rules; it does not jeopardize existing water rights; it's future-focused and provides a framework for guiding communities and new partnerships/investments across the state.
- In the pilot phase now. With only a 2-month solicitation, OWRD has received 82 inquiries received, 24 places expressed interest. 16 letters of interest. \$3.6 million in funding requested. \$750,000 available funding.



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- 4 places selected to receive funding: Upper Grande Ronde, Lower John Day, Mid-Coast (Newport area), and Malheur Lake. Doing 5-year groundwater study now in Malheur Lake, engaging the planning effort alongside the science.
- Lessons Learned – It's important to have a convener with a strong local leader and with a vision. There's a need to survey stakeholders and do an 'environmental scan' before collaboration is initiated. Neutral facilitation is essential to engage all stakeholders at the table.

PARTICIPANT QUESTIONS and DISCUSSION

- The OWRD place-based planning funding is primarily used for capacity building – such as hiring facilitators, hiring staff for coordination, technical assistance.
- There's a critical need in Oregon to invest more in understanding and monitoring groundwater supplies. OWRD is investing in a 5-year groundwater study in Harney County with the U.S. Geological Survey.
- Legislation being proposed to require mandatory measurement as these monitoring wells.
- Some stakeholders are concerned that OWRD may be crossing into ODA's ag water quality program. Some concern that the new strategy would compromise level of 'firewall' protection with ranchers and NRCS for privacy protection. Emphasize voluntary approach---coming to the table in a good-faith effort. Landowners choose whether or not to share their information as part of the collaborative effort.
- Waterwatch is an advisor for Upper Grand Ronde; a lead partner of the John Day basin; conveyor's choose who the partners are.
- \$93,000 in reserve for those four basins....will that funding explore lessons learned? Working with National Policy Consensus Center to offer collaborative training to the four pilot areas. But it's up to the convener and partners to decide whether or not to use those resources.
- 12 conveners not funded are still being engaged for future potential projects
- Is Forestry part of the conversation within those four pilot basins? Yes. Several forestry groups were present at the last Mid-Coast meeting.

Seasonal High Tunnel Initiative

Loren Unruh, NRCS

- See FAQ for more information on Seasonal High Tunnel Initiative, next application deadline is May 19, 2017.
- Next application date for Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) in Oregon will be coming up in April for the state-level CIG. The national CIG application deadline has passed (it was in January) and those selections are expected to be announced in May.



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- Ron Alvarado toured an operation in Cleveland, Ohio, where NRCS has helped producers put high tunnels into urban plots in places where they don't have access to fresh, healthy foods. They were providing fresh foods to the community well into the winter, so it allowed them to expand production season.
- "Food Deserts" exist where people don't have ready access to fresh and healthy foods – Seasonal High Tunnel initiative provides an opportunity to support those communities
- Seasonal High Tunnel funds are not eligible to be awarded for uses of production of federally illegal crops such as marijuana.

NRCS Technology Update – New Erosion Technology

Denise Troxell, NRCS

- Universal soil loss equation requires hand calculations paved the way for erosion calculations. It was later revised, called "Revised Universal Soil Loss Equation"
- Integrated Erosion Tool – coming in the future, which is part of the Keystone Center's Field to Market Initiative
- New erosion tool will integrate with conservation planning tools
- Keystone full members include many public and private institutions, companies, non-profits, agencies, etc.
- Integrated Erosion Tool calculates sheet and rill erosion, wind erosion, PM10 air particulate matter, soil conditioning index, and soil tillage intensity rating.
- The new tool is much more improved than previous erosion tools and integrates with modern mapping tools (ArcGIS)
- Upcoming webinars to train people on how to use the tool – it's coming in February / March
- Planning tool can help farmers and ranchers as they plan out their future cropping systems
- Tool can help provide better planning assistance to determine their current rate of soil loss and implications based on cropping systems they might plan to incorporate as they adopt new technology, new ideas and new rotations.
- Improves and streamlines conservation planning process

NRCS Client Gateway and FSA Farm Plus

Tracy Robillard, NRCS and Taylor Murray, NRCS



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- Client Gateway is a new tool that helps NRCS customers request assistance, sign documents, track payments, upload images and more. Watch the video and sign up at www.nrcs.usda.gov/clientgateway
- FSA Farm Plus is a similar site that allows producers to manage their FSA accounts. Learn more at: <https://www.fsa.usda.gov/online-services/farm-plus/>
- Both tools require producers to sign up for a Level 2 eAuthentication account. This is a secure account that requires an identity verification process, to ensure your data is protected.
- These tools are not meant to replace in-person visits to local service centers, but they provide producers another option for doing business with USDA from the comfort and convenience of their home computers.
- Client Gateway is now available to businesses and entities, which can ease the workload of getting multiple signatures on documents. Start by signing up for an individual account, then your local NRCS office can establish you as a full signatory authority for your entity. People with full signatory authority can then designate other members of their entity permission to view and electronically sign documents.
- Client Gateway is now viewable on mobile devices, but initial account registration still requires a desktop computer.

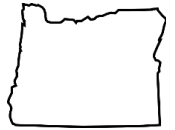
Farm Service Agency Update

Taylor Murray, FSA

- The organic certification cost-share program is new with FSA. It helps people apply for cost-shares toward their certification. No matter what county you are in, you can access this service. Forms and reporting process is being standardized across all of FSA and will alleviate past issues of various reporting requirements for each state.
- Cooperative Grants – 1 with Oregon Tilth and 1 with Northwest Centers of Alternative Pesticides. These grants help these organizations access funding and other programs through FSA.
- Administration changes in national office, announcements forthcoming.
- Emergency Conservation Program and Emergency Forest Restoration Program are impacted. EFRP funds entire process from beginning to end.
- Cultural Resources: FSA continues working with SHPO and with Oregon NRCS' new archaeologist to alleviate issues in the review process.
- Conservation Reserve Program – There's a cut in acreage for CRP nationwide. We'd like to keep the environmental benefits on these expired CRP contracts. 30,000 acres came out this



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year, 50,000 acres coming out next year. FSA coming up with a transition incentives program to help encourage landowners to keep the land into a conservation program, or rolling it into grassland. Transition Incentive Payment program for CRP.

- Umatilla, Sherman, Morrow counties have large CRP acreages that are coming out of the program.
- OWEB has finished CRP effective monitoring survey for the state, looks at different regions of the state
- OWEB training upcoming for CRP techs
- Need to train employees on CRP program, cultural reviews, working to set that up.

Closing Comments

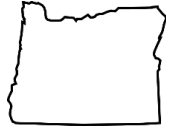
Events Coming up:

- CONNECT Conference May 2 – 4 in Pendleton
- Oregon Soil Health Partners Webinar Feb. 28 at 10 a.m.
- The Oregon Water Resources is hosting a Dam Safety Conference on February 28, 2017 from 8-5pm in Corvallis. For more information and to register, follow this link:
http://www.oregon.gov/owrd/SW/docs/dam_safety/2017_Conference/registration%202017.pdf
- OWEB – Listening sessions upcoming in March for strategic plan
- Recent state CIG grant, having Wasco County Farm Tour May 16 – Robert Wallace with Wy'East on-farm irrigation info exchange and farm tour
- Ron Alvarado: How can we continue to improve? NRCS continually seeks feedback from partners
- Marc Thalaker – OTAC talked about ideas for next Farm Bill. Looked at resource concerns in Oregon, would like to hear people's input on ideas for next Farm Bill. Desire to gather collective feedback from a wider group to represent Oregon's resource concern interests for future Farm Bill.
- ODF and other state agencies getting together to discuss new Farm Bill priorities from the state (Governor's office)
- **NEXT OTAC Meeting is June 15.**

- END -



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